DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 187 778 UD 020 457

AUTHOR Kendis, Randall Jay
TITLE Don't Make Waves: Traditional Value Utilization by Elderly Japanese Americans in Family Conflict Avoidance.
PUB DATE 1 Dec 79
NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association (Cincinnati, OH, December 1, 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Development; Anthropology; Conflict; *Conflict Resolution; *Family Relationship; Grandchildren; Japanese American Culture; *Japanese Americans; *Older Adults; Parent Aspiration; Parent Background; Parent Child Relationship; *Security (Psychology); *Self Esteem; Social Science Research

ABSTRACT

A research study was conducted to explore if and how cultural elements operate to facilitate or inhibit the meeting of needs that constitute successful adaptation to old age among Japanese Americans. Anthropological techniques of participant-observation, informal and structured interviews, and a survey were used as research methods. Formal interviews were conducted with 35 elderly Japanese Americans; survey responses were collected from 150 elderly Japanese Americans and from 102 of their children. Findings indicate that most of the aging Japanese American participants, children and grandchildren provide a large measure of the important elements which contribute to successful adaptation in the later years of life: a sense of security, a feeling of self-worth stemming from life accomplishments, and a source of satisfaction in interpersonal relationships. In order for the elderly Japanese American to maintain this vital source of satisfaction, it is incumbent upon them to minimize the potential for conflict. This is accomplished by strategically adapting existing interactional patterns by emphasizing the importance of values and attitudes so as to avoid the opportunity for dissension or the development of friction. (Author/MK)

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TRADITIONAL VALUE UTILIZATION BY ELDERLY JAPANESE AMERICANS IN FAMILY CONFLICT AVOIDANCE

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Randall Jay Kendis

Illincis State University

UD020457

Presented at the Annual Meeting, American Anthropological Association, Cincinnati, Ohio, December 1, 1979.

DON'T MAKE WAVES:
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IN FAMILY CONFLICT AVOIDANCE

Among Japanese Americans there is a great emphasis on family relationships. Parents have a filiocentric orientation, and take great and continued pride in the growth and moral development of the children, in their educational successes, and then in their happy marriages and successful careers. They continue to consider the parent-child tie to be a close and strong bond, perhaps closer and stronger than other Americans with more individualistic and nuclear family orientations, even as the children become adults and have families of their own. This importance of children continues throughout the life cycle and into old age, and it is to the children that the older parent looks for the satisfaction of many of their important needs. For the purposes of this paper we will focus on three basic needs related to successful adaptation among the elderly - that of security, a sense of worth, and meaningful interpersonal relationships. With so great an emphasis on children the quality of the relationship of the parent with the adult child cannot help but be an important factor in the adjustment to aging, whether it be positive or negative. For these Japanese Americans, despite the differences in background between parent and child, the rapid acculturation of the children, the differences in values and attitudes, and the problems that these differences engender, the relationships with children, by-and-large, contribute in a positive way to their adaptation by answering in large measure all three of the needs delineated.

The concept of adaptation as used in this study with reference to the elderly is two-fold - it is used as both the process of change or non-change of behavior or belief patterns that produce better adjustment or fit of one's condition to his environment, and as the extent to which certain needs

important in old age are met. These needs include: (1) the need for security, (2) the need for a sense of accomplishment, (3) the need to be useful, (4) the need for independence or autonomy, (5) the need for meaningful social relationships; other elements influencing the individual's adaptation include (6) the acceptance of old age as a natural stage of the life cycle, (7) the evaluation of the person's present life condition when compared to his past, (8) the level of satisfaction with one's life, and (9) a reconciliation of one's feelings regarding the knowledge of his own inevitable death.

Research was conducted over a 13 month period, from July, 1977 through August of 1978 in the city of Gardena, California where Japanese Americans comprise approximately 20% of the population. The purpose of the research was to explore if and how cultural elements operate to facilitate or inhibit the meeting of certain needs that constitute successful adaptation to old age, and the target population was those elderly Japanese Americans who were successfully coping with elderly status. The sample was limited to relatively healthy individuals for the most part for whom finances were not a major problem, in order to minimize the confounding influences of poor health and insufficient income - two factors frequently seem to be strongly associated with adjustment in old age.

A multi-method approach to the problem was adopted, combining the anthropological techniques of participant-observation, informal and structured interviews and survey research techniques. Formal interviews were conducted with about 35 elderly Japanese, ranging from 2 hours to a total of over 20 hours in some cases. Survey results are from the responses of 150 elderly Japanese and from 102 of their children. The ages of the elderly ranged from 60 years

to 90 years, with the mean being 72.8 years. Women comprised 68.0% of the survey sample, and two generations were represented among the elderly: the issei, or immigrant generation accounts for 60.8% of the sample and their offspring generation, the nisei, accounts for 39.2% (kibei nisei - 24.3%, nisei - 14.9%).

One important element contributing to an individual's adaptation in the later years of life is a sense of security, a belief that there are people or institutions they can depend upon in times of need, that they are confident will be reliable sources of assistance and support. Security is particularly important to the elderly as they begin to sense their own increasing physical ills and limitations, as friends and acquaintances they have known for years pass away, and as the realization of the possibility of their own dependency begins to rest more heavily upon them. For most aging Japanese Americans in this study, their children are the primary, and most important haven of safety.

Security means that the elderly can depend upon their children for both material and emotional support if they become necessary. However, the expressed desire and intention of the married couples and most widows in the sample is to remain as self-sufficient as possible, for as long as possible. They recognize that their children have their own lives to lead and their own families to raise, and hope to be as little a burden as possible. At the same time, the desire to be self-reliant does not include the wish to be separated and out of contact with the children. For most autonomy in terms of finances appears to be possible. Between savings, investments and social security (which is not seen as charity since they are drawing on the money they put in), most seem able to support themselves financially. The fact

that they do not need money certainly contributes to their feeling of self-reliance and independence.

Security, however, does not lie simply in receiving aid when it is needed, but in a real sense lies more in the firm conviction that they would receive help, if it were needed. Here the Japanese American parents (96.9%) were almost unanimous in the belief that in the event they needed financial help, their children would be willing to provide it to them. Ideally, they would never need to rely on the children for money, but should something happen to necessitate it, they are confident of the children's dependability.

The belief that the children will help them financially is only one aspect of the reliability the parents attribute to their offspring. In times of illness or if help is needed, it is the child to whom the aging parent will turn[1]. It is the family tie that is seen as the most dependable and the one which can sustain the greatest stress. Disagreements or harsh words may disrupt relations between a parent and a child, but they are, afterall, family and will be reconciled and all forgiven. With friends discord may never be forgotten.

In addition to providing a sense of material security and emotional support, the children also take on importance as mediators between their parents and American society. Due to historical factors and cultural differences most of the older Japanese in America never fully participated in American culture. Even today their activities are largely limited to the Japanese

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[1]Married men indicate they would first turn to their wives for aid and care; women, both married and widowed, say they would turn first to a child, or sometimes to a son's wife.

American community, rather than the American community in general. Children provide a valuable service for the parents by bridging the American and Japanese American worlds. The children are people the parents can trust to faithfully translate for them when necessary, to look after their best interests when dealing with the bureaucracy, and to explain how the "American way" differs from the parents' "Japanese way" in situations when the two conflict. In this way, too, they are the source of security to whom the parents turn.

The need for emotional support is basic to human beings at all periods in the life cycle, and the family is an emotional network as much as a network in which goods and services are exchanged. The elderly Japanese Americans have a high emotional dependency upon their children, and this is reflected in the high level of interaction between them. The great majority of the elderly Japanese Americans live in relatively close proximity to at least one of their adult children, and report seeing them often, and the children confirm the high frequency. For instance, 45.8% of the sample reported living within walking distance of at least one child's home, and 95.8% were within a short ride away. Almost two-thirds (63.3%) had seen a child within the past day or so and nearly all (95.0%) had seen one within the past week or so. Half of the children responding indicated that they saw their parent daily or nearly so, and 79.4% saw them at least once a week. None saw their parents less than a few times each month.

The parent-child tie is of particular importance for the Japanese Americans because of the absence of other supportive networks frequently available to the elderly of other groups. For the older Japanese American there is little family with which to interact other than children and

grandchildren. For the issei, emigration from Japan broke families apart, with brothers and sisters of those who came to America remaining in Japan, and this accounts for the absence of other generational kin in the United States. In the absence of other kin upon whom they can call for help, comfort and companionship, the aging Japanese American becomes even more reliant upon his children for emotional support and the intimate contact necessary to maintain good mental health.

In addition to the rather restricted range of kin with whom face-to-face interaction is possible, the elderly also face a constriction in their friendship networks. Japanese Americans pursue a small number of reliable relationships (Kiefer 1975:9) and friendships develop slowly, over a period of many years. For a group which places such a high emphasis on holding things in, on the impropriety of revealing personal or family problems to others, and on the preference not to burden others, the cathartic outlet that a good friend can provide for pent-up emotions and stress can be significant. But the number of, and access to, good friends which aging Japanese Americans have are becoming more and more limited, and the friendship tie is contributing less and less to their continued adjustment and well-being. Good friends are lost through death and illness. People who were the most intimate of companions now get together infrequently. This type of friend, once so important to the older Japanese American, is disappearing more and more and can never be replaced. Not only are friends lost through death and infirmity but parents are moving from their own homes to relocate with or near children. This also separates friends and it takes a long time to develop new ones.

We can see that the children provide the aging parent with a sense of security and a source of social interaction, two of the elements contributing

to an older person's positive adaptation. Children and grandchildren are also the source from which the elderly derive feelings of having made worthwhile accomplishments in life and also feelings of usefulness through the continuation of their participating in an exchange network in which goods and services flow between the aging parent and their children and grandchildren, and which serve to assure them of a meaningful place within the family.

Japanese Americans, especially issei, are highly filiocentric and this child-centered orientation is so strong in the lives of the older Japanese American that it is not an exaggeration to say that the importance of the children as the focus of their lives is paramount. Since raising the children was seen as the most important job of the wife and providing for them the most important job of the husband, the success of the children reflects well on the parents, displaying the good job that they did. In fact, the older Japanese American parents consider the success of their children and hence their own success, as the major satisfaction and accomplishment in their lives. Even when the parents had accomplished a great deal in their own lives, it was the children's success that was the most satisfying.

The fact that the older person, in his less productive phase, looks to his children's successes for a sense of accomplishment while they are at their most productive, works well for the Japanese Americans and contributes to their successful aging. Like the playwright who, in his old age, sees plays that he labored over as a young man performed, the elderly Japanese American can look to the success of his own production, which he labored to nurture, shape and develop. Each feels he is now entitled to sit back and bask in the success of his labor.

The parents have reason to be proud. The second and third generations did well not only by comparison with the first generation, but also by comparison to the American population as a whole. A study based on the 1960 census shows that the Japanese population in America had a greater percentage of college graduates than the white population (18.4% Japanese vs. 10.3% white), a greater percentage of their people in white-collar occupations (56.0% Japanese vs. 42.1% white), and were second only to white males in terms of the median income (the median income for Japanese males was 99.3% of that of white males) (Schmid and Nobbe 1965:913-919). This accomplishment and prosperity is far beyond what most of the older Japanese ever dreamed possible for their dependants in the short span of a single generation, and they are extremely proud and indulge in the vicarious enjoyment which these attainments offer to them.

Education and financial success are not the only accomplishments of the children that the parents delight in. The family has always been important to the older Japanese Americans, and they are pleased to see that central values regarding the importance of the family have successfully been transmitted to their children, if in a somewhat reduced form. There is the general belief among Japanese Americans and nonJapanese Americans alike that the Japanese American family is closer and bound by stronger ties. The importance of the marriage bond is emphasized and divorce is strongly discouraged. There is evidence that the rate of divorce among Japanese Americans is lower than among other groups (1.6% for nisei according to Kitano [1969:64]). None of the elderly Japanese Americans responding to the questionnaire were separated or divorced, and only 6.9% of the children responding were. Even third and fourth generation Japanese Americans cite as a value difference

between Japanese Americans and Americans the emphasis placed on the closeness of the family. These young, later-generation parents (in their 20s and 30s) feel that they do more for their children and spend more on them, watch over them more closely and foster a greater dependence on the family than do nonJapanese Americans, are willing to inconvenience themselves more for their children, and relate to them in Japanese American ways which are distinct from mainstream patterns (Oguri-Kendis 1979).

The elderly's adult children have also assimilated some of the Japanese values regarding the importance of and obligations to older parents. They may not know by name, but recognize the existence of such traditional values as on and oyakokó. On is an obligation passively incurred, one form of which is oya on - on received from parents, a debt which is never-ending and unrepayable. The pre-War moral education which the parents received (shushin) taught that "On to your parents is deeper than the ocean and higher than the mountain" and that "One can never repay even one ten-thousanth of the on one owes one's parents," but as one wore this obligation an effort to discharge it was required, and care and respect for the parent in his old age was just one way of repaying part of the debt. Filial piety (oyakoko) stems from this obligation and demands that the child take the responsibility for the parents on his shoulders, and respect and obey them.

The children do feel an obligation to the parent, and more than an obligation, they feel a deep sense of gratitude for the hardships the parents endured to provide the opportunities they have for their children. These elements - obligation and gratitude - are expressed in a variety of ways. One way is in the willingness to provide the security for the parents which was discussed previously, and extends to the belief that if the parent is not able

to care for himself, it is the child's obligation to do so. For instance, even though three-quarters of the children feel it is difficult for a family when an elderly parent lives with them, three-fifths of the sample feel that the best living arrangement for an elderly person of their parents' generation who can no longer take care of himself is with one of the children. The majority also felt that an adult child should willingly help their parent financially even if it meant foregoing luxury items or activities, such as a vacation (87.1%), or if it meant using money set aside for their own children's education (60.8%).

Children also demonstrate their gratitude and thereby acknowledge their parents' worth through verbal thanks and through the presentation of gifts to the parents on special occasions. These gifts are often extravagent by most American's standards. It is not unusual for children to join together and give their parents an all-expenses-paid trip to Mexico, Hawaii, Europe or Japan for a wedding anniversary of special significance. Children will also organize large, elaborate celebrations (especially for fathers) for particular birthdays which traditionally were considered important (kanreki [60] which celebrates transition to old age, koki [70] - "rare old age", kiju [77] - "age which everybody enjoys", and beyiju [88] the character for which looks like the character for the word "rice" which is a symbol of longevity).

Some gifts to parents are very lavish, but the size of the expression does not necessarily reflect the pleasure that the parents derive from that expression, nor its importance in communicating to the elderly that what they have done is of value. As one elderly issei put it:

> My children are always thanking me for their education, that they wouldn't be where they are without it. Quite often they thank me and my wife. That makes all the hard work we did worthwhile.

One of the threats to successful aging is the possible loss of the sense of ongoing utility an individual has. As once meaningful roles become obsolete and the aging person experiences social role decline there is the danger that he will feel he, as a social being enmeshed in a world of exchange, has nothing of value to offer to others. If adequate and acceptable sources for proving his worth by both giving to and receiving from others in his relatively less engaged position are not found, a maladaptive shift in the self-worth is likely with the possible result being despair (Erikson

The usefulness upon which the Japanese American has based his self-evaluation has in large part come from his family roles. Besides the marriage bond, we will concentrate here on the parental role for this is the area where the elderly Japanese Americans have the highest affective attachment and ego involvement and it is with the children that they are most able to maintain a meaningful process of exchange. They provide what they believe to be useful services for the child, and these beliefs are reaffirmed by the reciprocal provision of goods and services by the children.

One senses that there is more than just a desire to be useful. For some there is a certain unspoken but subtly expressed urgency to do things of value for the children. As discussed above the children are essential sources of security for the parents, and one gets the impression when talking to the elderly that many feel they must do things for the children in order to prove their usefulness not only to themselves, but to their children as well,

in order to insure the continuance of this security. Stated in its least appealing light, as long as parents remain useful to the child they are, if not indispensable, at least less dispensable. This is probably not consciously felt by the majority of the elderly, for they feel that the affective and obligatory bonds that tie are sufficiently strong to assure them of security; however, it can not hurt to make oneself needed.

There are rather active exchange networks between parents and children operating in both directions, of goods and services. Questionnaire responses indicated that more than half of the parents had given money to at least one of their children within the past year, and a similar percentage had received money from a child (53.1% and 56.9% respectively) but frequently this money was given as gifts for birthdays, anniversaries or other special occasions, and not to help with the living expenses.

A greater percentage of both parents (70.8%) and children (96.0%) indicated that they helped each other in a variety of ways other than purely financial. A substantial number of the children report regularly helping their parents in the following ways (listed in order of decreasing percentages): providing transportation (67.3%), running errands (63.3%), shopping for them, or going shopping with them (60.2%), providing companionship (57.1%), giving them advice (48.0%), and helping them with household tasks or yardwork (37.8%). It is interesting that it is instrumental tasks which the children report providing for the parents most frequently, and that the more expressive ones (providing companionship and giving advice) are less frequently provided. Even so, the tasks that are frequently done by the children are those which are not likely to excessively strain the relationship such as a need for continuing financial support might.

Parents provide services to their children primarily in the domestic sphere, and for the most part these also are instrumental rather than expressive. There are also expressive contributions which they make, and certainly some of the instrumental ones contain expressive elements for either the parent, the child, or both, and in addition the parents control valuable information which in certain circumstances is sought out by the children but this is limited. As with the activity pattern in general, it is the women who provide these services to a much greater extent than the men, whose instrumental contribution is limited primarily to helping care for the yard and doing some gardening. It is not unusual for mothers, expecially if they live with the child, to help out with various household tasks. In many cases this frees the adult daughter to work full or part-time, and in this way the mother is not only providing some of the daily maintenance tasks of the family but is contributing to the financial well-being of the family unit as well. Even when the daughter does not work or they do not live together it allows the mother and daughter to share the household work and gives them the opportunity to regularly see each other. In most cases these activities of the mother are helpful to the child (although differences in housekeeping styles is one source of occasional friction) and provides the mother with useful activities which benefit the family. Helping care for the children's home is not limited to those women living in the home. The residential proximity of many parents and children makes it easy for a mother to come over to help, and many do.

One of the most important services that the older mother provides comes in her role as grandmother. As with housework, by helping care for her grandchild a woman can free her daughter or daughter-in-law for employment. Many women reported caring for their grandchildren, or at least babysitting

when the parents went out at night or on vacation. It is something that the children turn to them for, and which secures for them a position as a functioning and contributing member of the family at least for a while.

As the children reach an age at which they are able to care for themselves and no longer need a baby sitter, the role the grandmother plays becomes much less active and more like that the grandfather has played all along - that of a relatively benign, benevolent, passive relation. The grandchildren are caught up in their own worlds of activities and relationships and have little time for the grandparents. Few of the grandchildren speak Japanese and language difficulties often make it a problem for grandchildren and grandparents to communicate beyond the very basics. The pleasures that the grandparents derive from their grandchildren becomes similar to the pleasures vicariously derived from the children's successes - a good education, good behavior, and if the grandchildren are old enough, good marriages and jobs. What the grandparent contributes is no longer care, but small gifts, money and praise, in an effort to make the grandchildren happy, and to insure that they regard the grandparents as kind and affectionate individuals who will be remembered for "doing something" for them after the grandparent's death.

Because they perceive themselves as Japanese living in America, but view their children and grandchildren as Americans of Japanese ancestry and that the world they came from is so different from the one their children live in, the parents feel that they have little useful information to give to their children, or that their children are interested in their experiences. Therefore, they are reluctant to offer advice or suggestions, and the children ask infrequently. The information the children do solicit is generally about

ceremonial or cultural items rather than information about day-to-day living - how to cook certain Japanese foods, what food and behaviors are appropriate for Japanese New Years or Obon and what their significance is, and, when someone dies, how much koden (funeral money) is appropriate. In those few instances where parents are frequently consulted by their children or grandchildren the elderly are enormously pleased that they can be of help, and are of interest. They feel it helps maintain a flow in the relationship, and gives them a more secure position.

It appears that it is generally the woman who has information to provide to the children, since more of her activities (e.g. cooking, sewing) are directly transferable. The man, in no longer pursuing his major task as breadwinner for the family, loses much of his authority, and what he knows from his years as a farmer may not seem very important to his sons who are dentists, doctors, teachers and the like. There are a few cases in which the men retain a patriarchal quality, and this is more likely to occur where the father has something of material value to offer. Men who have less in concrete terms to offer their children, while still treated with a measure of respect, are less likely to retain positions of authority.

There is generally agreement between the two generations of what the respective obligations are of one toward the other. Ideally, there is very little that the older parent should be obligated to do for their adult child. This reflects an attitude on the children's part that the parents should be free to enjoy themselves while they are able. Both parents and children frequently report that the children entreat the parents to relax, not to worry about helping around the house, to go out and enjoy themselves and to spend their money on things they would like without worrying about saving it for the

children. To a certain extent children seem not to realize the importance that contributing to the family has for the elderly.

In light of the findings that parents provide more instrumentally oriented services to the children in the exchange network, it is interesting that both generations feel it is expressive items which the parent has the greatest obligation to provide. Companionship was selected more than any other item (52.2% of the elderly and 46.2% of the children felt it was the older parents' obligation to provide this to the child). The second highest item was advising the children (parents - 42.4%, children - 44.8%), while the more task-oriented items such as helping with household chores were less important. Interestingly, with the exception of one item a higher percentage of parents felt these to be obligations than did the children. This tends to support the idea that the parents to a greater extent than the children feel they must insure their position in the family by remaining active in the exchange system. The one item which more children than parents felt was a parent's obligation was in giving advice - the most emotion-laden and intrusive item with the greatest potential for alienating parent from child, and which the parents see as something to be avoided. Again we see a rather idealized vision of the place of the older Japanese American parent, somewhat at odds with the observed reality, as a person who can provide company and impart wisdom without having to exert themselves with work-like activities.

The parents' perceptions of a child's obligations and the actual behavior that the children report doing for their parents are also similar. The most important thing to the parent is transportation (50.7% feel it is the child's obligation to provide it), and 67.3% of the children report regularly taking their parents someplace. The social world of the elderly

Japanese American is relatively small, and many of these older Japanese Americans, having little or no English, find it difficult and frightening trying to get places using the buses. Many times without the children to take them to activities or to visit friends, their social world is even more greatly reduced. The need the parents have for this outside activity and contact is reflected in the importance that they place on their children's providing transportation, but the restriction the children feel this places on their own freedom of movement is another source of friction.

In general, the parent-child relationship remains good because the tie has not been severely strained by demands on either side, and because their perceptions of what is expected of each other are roughly congruent. Children acknowledge a debt to their parents, are concerned for their welfare and express sentiments of filial piety. The parents, however, due to a relatively comfortable economic position and good physical health, and the desire to remain self-reliant, have not put an excessive burden on the children requiring much sacrifice on their part. This is especially true regarding financial support, and for the most part children have not been faced with having to make a decision regarding the relative importance of the ascending (parent) or descending (child) generation. Where demands are placed on the child the provision of useful services coupled with an interactional style which minimizes friction serve to keep the relationship functioning. The strains which develop in parent-child relationships and the adaptive strategy that the parents have developed to deal with these problems are the topics of the following section.

The bond between parent and child for the older Japanese American is extremely important for it is within the family that the parent finds security, the place in which he continues to prove that he is a useful individual, the source for the important sense of accomplishment, and the center for meaningful social interaction and interpersonal relations. The satisfaction of these needs for most individuals in the sample contributes significantly to their successful accommodation to their later years. But because the family provides for the satisfaction of these important needs and is an environment which maintains a high level of support it should not be assumed that it is friction-free and without conflict. And simply because parents and children exchange services and help, and recognize the validity of this exchange, does not mean they always view it as pleasant - frequently it seems an imposition, an inconvenience, and undesirable.

Since parents and children appear to agree in principle on the major issues of the parent-child relationship, it is not surprising that it is the small, day-to-day particulars which can cause the greatest problems. To recognize and appreciate the needs of an elderly parent is one thing, but to provide for these needs day after day, when it interferes with your own plans and freedom is quite another. Similarly, it can be difficult for the parent to balance the importance he places on his children with the realization that the children have their own lives to live, only a portion of which involves the parent.

There are many little things which both generations find frustrating. Having to rely on the children for transportation is one example. It is important to the parent that they be able to go out to activities and be with other people rather than having to stay at home all day, every day, and because

they feel incapable of or uncomfortable using public transportation they rely heavily on their children. But they complain that they have to wait until it is convenient for the children to take them, and they are unable to make their own plans. Others who want to go places but are afraid it would inconvenience the children hold back from asking, in part out of consideration, in part out of fear of being a burden. On the children's part they are likely to be unhappy whether they regularly chauffeur their parent around or not. To be available to take them places is an impostion and places limits upon the child's own freedom of movement and social life. If, however, they refuse to take their parents places they may begin to feel guilty.

Other problems arise because the parent may not feel that they are appreciated by the family, while the child feels that the parent isn't considerate enough. The wide range of other small tasks that the children often have to do for the parents, especially if they speak and write little or no English, can also build up resentment over time. Problems can also arise from differences in personality, tastes and habits. One of the problems most frequently mentioned, and given as an argument for parents and children living separately are differences in diet preferences. Most older Japanese prefer a meal that consists primarily of vegetables and rice with perhaps a little meat or fish, while their children prefer a more heavy western-style meat-and-potatoes (or meat-and-rice) dinner. It is not unusual to hear that where a parent and child are living together it is necessary to prepare two meals each night.

As with any relationship it is often difficult to put up with the moods of one another. One or the other may be stubborn or overbearing or dull. If the parent and child cohabitate, other little habits and desires

may create tensions. One may smoke and the other not. One may be messy and the other extremely neat. When a parent and child are living together one or the other frequently feels that it is not really their home, and while open conflict may be suppressed it is easy for frustrations to build which find an outlet elsewhere, or else are internalized to the detriment of the individual's mental health.

Yet another problem area is in striking a balance in the frequency in which the parents and children see each other that is acceptable to each. The data indicate that there is a high level of intergenerational contact, and while the majority of parents and children are satisfied that they see each other enough (73.6% and 84.2% respectively) both parents and children caution about seeing each other too often. If they see each other too often, they always know what the other has been doing, and have nothing to talk about; if they are apart then they enjoy being together and have things to talk about. Parents more than children feel that they are imposing by their presence and acknowledge that children can get tired of the parent if too much time is spent together. Sometimes the balance between the need for companionship and the need for privacy or at least separation is difficult to strike. The relationship between the parent and the child is basically asymmetrical, with the parent more dependent on the child than vice-versa. For the parents, to a large extent their children are the center around which their lives revolve. But in the case of the children the parents are lower on their list - most often after themselves, their spouses and their own children. The parent has fewer options in their sources of intimate contact than do the children, and must depend upon the children more strongly. Unlike the child who can find satisfaction with their parents, their

children, their spouses, their friends, their business associates, etc., the parent has children, perhaps a close friend or two, and most likely no one else to whom he can turn.

Taken together, all these amount to a lack of privacy and independence for both the adult child and the aging parent. Children complain that having a parent live with them imposes on their own freedom too much. Three-quarters of the children feel it is difficult for a family when an elderly parent lives with them. Often they feel they have to "report" to the parent, and if the parent helps care for the grandchildren the adult child feels even more is expected of them. The parents, on their part, also feel that living together infringes on their privacy and independence. They feel they can't eat when they want, don't have the option of leaving the house untidy if they so choose, or to come and go as they like.

It is the lack of these elements of privacy and independence which lies at the heart of much of the difficulty between cohabitating parent and child, and is reflected in the living arrangement preferences expressed. It was found that the sample overwhelmingly felt that the best arrangement for healthy, married individuals over 65 was to live apart from the children. A majority also believe that it is best for healthy widows to live on their own: only 19.4% feel that a widowed woman over 65 should live with a child, while 71.6% of the sample feels the best arrangement is to live alone near a child, 1.5% say alone away from children and 7.5% feel that a home for the aged is best. The children share this attitude: 73.7% feel that the best arrangement for a healthy widowed individual of their parents' generation is alone, near one of the children, and only 24.2% feel it is best that they share a home with their child.

Conflict-avoiding Behavioral Strategy

The great importance to the elderly Japanese American parent of the parent-child relationship for the satisfaction of the adaptive needs has been a major topic of this paper. Yet despite the general agreement, in principle, between the parents and children of their respective obligations vis-a-vis one another, there is a tremendous potential for difficulties stemming from the day-to-day realities of interacting. The general asymmetrical nature of the relationship in which the parents are more highly dependent upon their children as the focus for satisfying their needs than are the children upon the parent, and the imbalance in the range of options the two have, makes it incumbent upon the parent to develop an interactional approach which minimizes the possibility of alienating the child. The family represents the final haven, and it is important that the elderly have the security of knowing that they will remain integrated in the family, if nowhere else. The elderly Japanese recognize this and act accordingly.

The solution to this problem has been the development and utilization by the elderly of a particular behavioral style composed of both traditional Japanese and non-traditional elements which minimizes the potential for conflict and, from the parent's point of view, hopefully serves to promote a fluid and enduring relationship. Among the factors which make up this behavioral style are a sensitivity for the feelings and conditions of others; the adoption of a posture of deference, modesty and politeness which includes a restraint from expressing one's desires and complaints, the avoidance of open confrontation, and the recognition of a realignment in the parent-child relationship; an attempt to remain useful within the family unit; a sense of gratitude for what their children provide; and an accommodation to chance and an acceptance of things that cannot be changed.

The elderly are aware of their own needs and are sensitive to the burden these place on their children. Regardless of what they believe their children may or may not be obligated to provide for them, they express a frequent concern that they "don't want to burden the children." Perhaps more than any other single factor it is being a burden, of becoming "a problem", which they fear might create difficulties. The major thrust of the parents' interactional style with their children is directed at being as little a problem or inconvenience as possible.

One way in which they attempt to do this is by exercising restraint in making requests, revealing their desires, or expressing their complaints. Most of the older parents recognize that there has been a shift in the relative status they hold with respect to their children; where once the parent held an undisputed dominance position they are now equal or perhaps subordinante to (and dependent upon) the child. This is reflected in the belief that a parent has to increasingly hold back and downplay himself to the child as he ages. Over three-quarters of the sample agreed with the statement "When a person gets older they have to enryo to their children more and more in order not to upset the relationship." As Kitano points out, enryo is a norm related to power - "the manner in which 'inferiors' were supposed to behave to 'superiors' - that is, through deference and obsequiousness" (1969:104), and is a "restraint Ego imposes upon himself in interaction with Alter" to "avoid causing displeasure for others" (Lebra 1976:125,41). As such, for parents to enryo to children is to relinquish the contention that they are in the dominant position.

Older Japanese feel they should be as non-assertive, non-demanding, and non-intrusive as possible. They avoid interferring in the way the children

run their homes or in the way they raise their children. In part this stems from a recognition that the "Japanese style" and the "American style" are different, that they are Japanese and their children American: "The most important thing is to more-or-less go with the country you are in" (79 year-old woman) or "nisei raise their children as the Americans raise children . . . it's not bad the way they raise them. They shouldn't raise them the way we did, because they are living in this country" (75 year-old woman). Recognizing change, they make efforts to accept it, and make accommodations to it.

This orientation goes beyond exhibiting restraint in order to avoid being an inconvenience and a burden to the children, or interferring in their lives; it extends to the belief that parents should follow their children's advice. A total of 73.5% of the sample agreed that "when a person gets older they should follow their children's advice and do what the children think is best for them." This is in part due to an effort to be as non-intrusive as possible, in part to a belief that the children have a greater command of American culture, and in part to the recognition (on the part of some) of possible mental limitations.

In the course of daily relations the value of enryo helps to prevent problems from arising. Unfortunately, it is often impossible to keep every difficulty from arising, and to avoid open confrontation it is necessary for the parent to gaman - to internalize and suppress anger and emotion (Kitano 1969:109). Along with enryo, gaman is one of the more important Japanese values incorporated into this behavioral strategy. If opinions differ, or a parent is disappointed by some action of the child, rather than express this unhappiness or complaining, the typical response is to say

nothing, and to check the exhibition of the disappointment. A person who does not gaman is considered weak, and very few of the old Japanese reported hearing complaints from other Japanese and said they would never complain to anyone, with the possible exception of their closest friend.

Children seem to have mixed feelings about whether their parents should have to adapt their behavioral style as they age. On the one hand the children feel that the parents should recognize the shift in the relationship they have with their adult children, but on the other hand, hold to an ideal that the parents should be free from restraints. In general the sample of children as a whole tends to feel, at least in principle, that as a person gets older they should not have to enryo to their children more in order not to upset the relationship (63.7% feel they should not have to, while 34.3% feel they should). More of the children (but still less than half) feel that as a person gets older their children should enryo more to them in order not to upset the relationship (42.4%). The same pattern holds with regard to parents following children's advice: where 73.5% of the parents felt this was the proper behavior, only 26.5% of the children did.

These data support the idea that parents demand more of themselves in terms of restraint than the children demand of them, and that they feel they should cause as little trouble as possible by following their children's advice, whereas the children seem to feel that this is not necessary. This idea is further supported when we compare the responses of the parents and the children regarding what they feel an older parent's obligation to his children include. In every case where they feel they are providing something of value to the child a greater percentage of the parents feel it is a parent's obligation than do the children (financial help, helping with household tasks,

caring for grandchildren, providing companionship). In only one case, where the item is of an intrusive and potentially conflict-producing nature (giving advice) do fewer parents than children feel it is a parent's obligation to provide to their adult children. And, as was shown earlier in the paper, providing services and remaining useful to the child is clearly a part of the behavioral strategy older parents employ in an effort to assure their positions in the family structure. In other words, it is as though they are asking less than the children are willing to provide, and providing more than the children might deem necessary.

Another element which helps the parent maintain a good relationship is to be grateful for what the children offer, rather than ungrateful for what they do not. Comments such as "I don't expect anything from my children, don't want to ask for anything, but I'm so grateful for what they do for me" and "In Japan most people take care of their parents. Here it is different. If my children take care of me, I would be so grateful. If it would not be a trouble, I'd be thankful" are typical expressions of this orientation.

A certain fatalism helps the elderly to philosophically accept things that they feel they are powerless to change. When unspoken plans or expectations are spoiled they may be sad, but they adjust. As they say, things happen that you cannot plan on, and the acceptance of these as a part of the natural order is indicated by a shrug of the shoulders and a "shikata ga nai" - it cannot be helped.

Although the elderly accept "fate", and through the utilization of enryo and gaman try to minimize problems, they are not powerless in trying to effect change if they are unhappy. Even these methods are non-confronting,

indirect and subtle, in very much the Japanese fashion. Instilling guilt is one method used. If a parent feels she is not getting the attention she is due she may begin to say she knows what a burden her presence places on her child, which she does not want to be, and perhaps it would be better if she were to move to a retirement home. This threat carries the weight of both guilt and shame - not only should the child feel guilty that he is unable to meet the "meagre" needs of the parent, but also shame that the parent should be so unhappy as to be willing to move to such a place.

If a person has money that the children hope to inherit, this can be used as a stick for keeping children in line. One man who has retained his patriarchal position states "Since I have money, they have to treat me well." This, however, is an approach available to few of the elderly, and used by even fewer. Even in cases where the parent does not control resources the child wants, if the tie is characterized by affection and not just a sense of obligation, and a good relationship exists, the parent my still have considerable influence.

Some of the elderly Japanese have laid down long-term strategies for their old age with their children which they had initiated many years ago. While most feel the best living arrangement is other than with children, some realized that they may someday have to live with one of the children, or at least prefer that to other available options at the time. Recognizing this and believing that cooperation should be voluntary, they set out to lay a foundation. In general, the construction of these foundations dealt with building up good will and avoiding friction over the years. One man, now widowed and living with his son and daughter-in-law, recalls instructing his wife when his sons married to establish good relationships with the

daughters-in-law. He realized that he would have to be looked after by someone, and that it usually falls on the daughter-in-law, so he went out of his way to respect them. Others echo this strategy, and relate how one should never "go above" the daughter-in-law to the son with problems, but to work them out with her.

The basic purpose of the behavioral strategy the elderly Japanese follow is to maintain a working relationship with their children, who represent such a valuable source for meeting many of their adaptive needs. By emphasizing such factors as sympathy and compassion, by adopting a position of deference, modesty and politeness, by showing restraint in interaction and avoiding confrontation, by remaining useful to the child, and by feeling grateful for what they have and philosophically accepting what they do not have, they effectively are able to remain well integrated in the family. Here the adaptive person modifies his behavior over time, thus "aging successfully."

Summary

Among the elements which contribute to an individual's successful adaptation in the later years of life are a sense of security, a feeling of self-worth stemming from one's life accomplishments, and a source of satisfaction in interpersonal relationships. For most aging Japanese Americans in this study, children and grandchildren provide a large measure of all of these important factors.

To a great extent the parents have lived for their children in earlier years and now as they age they increasing live through their children and their accomplishments. The aging parents frequently try to be as self-reliant as possible, but both they and their children view the children as

as secure sources of material support, if it should become necessary, an assurance which frees the parent from concern and worry. A considerable amount of exchange of services, goods and advice occurs between the children and parents, and as the number of friends the parents have decreases through death or residential relocation, the children play increasingly more important roles as emotional supports. This is especially the case after the death of a spouse, but both marrieds and widows exhibit a high expressive dependency on children. Parents generally live close to children and see them regularly, and know they have someone nearby to call on in case of an emergency.

The parents see the successes of their children as reflections on themselves; since child-raising was a major task of their lives, it is a confirmation of how well they did their job. They are grateful for the attention and expressions of gratitude their children give them.

Relations between parents and children are not always smooth, especially as the parents enter a period of increased emotional dependency on the children while the children are reaching the heights of their own independence. While the affective tie with children is the most important for the elderly, for the adult child interaction with parents is only one of a number of potential sources of expressive satisfaction. This can create a problem since the older Japanese American no longer commands the power resources (e.g., money, property or valuable information important to the child) to insure compliance by his/her children to his/her dependency needs. In order to maintain this vital source of satisfaction it becomes incumbent upon the elderly to minimize the potential for conflict. This is accomplished by stratigically adapting existing interactional patterns by emphasizing the importance of certain values and attitudes in such a way

as to avoid the opportunity for dissension or the development of friction. In this way the parents are able to maintain an acceptable level and quality of interaction with their children - their primary source of security, interaction and satisfaction. Taken together, these contribute substantially to the adjustment of the older Japanese American.

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